

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Nat Wyse, and I am a resident of Manchester, CT. I am privileged to have status as a citizen and employment that allows me to access healthcare freely, and I stand with those in the community who are prevented from this same access.

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to healthcare. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

My family has lived in Connecticut since the 1930s, when my grandmother left pre-war Poland as a child, seeking safety and stability in Hartford, CT. For some time, she lived here without citizenship, attending school and eventually starting her own family. Yet because she was undocumented in a time before the harsh policies of the last 20 years, she was able to make do and build a family. Decades later, I work at a non-profit in Hartford not far from where she, her sister, and her mother once lived.

My family's story represents what could be: an opportunity to build a life, and even thrive, here in Connecticut. Yet undocumented immigrants today leave unsafe and unstable conditions only to find barrier after barrier here in the United States. Conflicts and tragedy persist today in Yemen, Haiti, Ukraine, and many other places, all the more reason to support those who are forced to flee and avoid compounding the traumas many have already experienced.

Thorough health coverage and access to preventative care are cost-effective for healthcare providers, because they prevent emergencies that require immediate and costly attention. This reduces the toll on healthcare workers dealing with crises, enabling better care for all who use our healthcare system.

The stress of a medical condition or emergency impacts not only the person who needs treatment, but also all of their friends and family who care about them. Even if a child is able to receive medical care, having an older sibling unable to access the same care will create stress for them both. This is also why we must keep fighting for access to medical care for all immigrants, regardless of age. If a parent is unable to get the care they need, it may prevent them from being able to care for their children, as well. Moreover, all people must have ready access to healthcare because it is a human right.

I am lucky to be able to write this letter without fears hanging over me that there may be medical concerns within my family that go undiscovered, because I know we all have ready access to preventative care, medication, and the ability to call our doctors. The benefits of good healthcare coverage are generational, and will continue to carry on.

Please join us in fighting for this bill and beyond. An inclusive healthcare system is possible for all in Connecticut, regardless of immigration status. I strongly support S.B. 284 and ask the committee to pass this legislation so that generations from now, many children of immigrants will consider themselves as fortunate as myself. Moreover, I urge you to fight for HUSKY coverage for all, regardless of age and immigration status.

Thank you for taking your time to read and hear the testimonies of the community.
Nat Wyse